‘Knitting needles, knotting shuttles, & Totums & Cards & Counters’: The Bluestockings and the material culture of fibre arts.[1]

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In her review article of the exhibition *Mrs Delany and her Circle* (Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven, 2009; Sir John Soane Museum, London, 2010) Amanda Vickery revisited the complicated relationship that women had with needlework and other crafts in the eighteenth century. She came to the conclusion that in the eighteenth century, ‘[d]omestic crafts were venerable, multivalent and eloquent – we have simply lost the power to read them.’[2] There have been important attempts in the field of design history, art history and theory and eighteenth-century studies to precisely read and re-read the material and ideological history of fibre arts in terms of gender, class and nation.[3] These interventions have unravelled the gendered binaries of intellectual work vs. needlework, public vs. private, professional vs. amateurish, art vs. crafts and labour vs. leisure and have identified that ‘women’s relationship to needlework was more complicated than a mere scripted performance of domestic ideology’ and conspicuous consumption.[4]

I will expand the complexities of women’s relationship to needlework by exploring the subtleties of material practices that speak of class and social mobility within one social network, the Bluestockings, by focusing on three case studies from the Bluestocking Circle: Mary Delany (1700-1788), Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) and her sister Sarah Scott (1721-1795). Whilst Mary Delany combined scientific expertise with proficient technical skills, Elizabeth Montagu designed and commissioned unique decorative fibre arts and interiors such as her famous feather work for public display whereas her sister, Sarah Scott, forced by diminished social and economic circumstances, became well versed in practical dress making and alteration, feather work and interior design. As I will explore later, none of these women were, professional needle workers but nevertheless were highly accomplished and, in the case of Sarah Scott, used commercial patterns and managed a quasi-professional workshop for her Elizabeth Montagu.

The juxtaposition of the three case studies identifies the markers of upwardly and downwardly mobile sociability in the production and consumption of fibre arts.[5] The production of fibre arts carried class markers in terms of what kind of work was produced and what kind of materials and techniques were used.[6] Thus, needlecraft, like fashion, was ‘an

emblem of material self-advancement, [and] … a badge of moral worth'.[7] This was, as I will argue, particularly apparent within the Bluestocking network. The Bluestockings united a varied group of men and women in the pursuit of intellectual improvement, polite sociability.[8] They occupied a markedly contradictory position within the discourses of eighteenth-century gender as, for them, the display of feminine accomplishments went hand in hand with the production of intellectual work and was shaped by intellectual exchange, patronage and business transactions.[9]

The Bluestockings and Female Accomplishments

> Alas, it is plain mankind look upon thought as the greater evil for there is no disease for which many cures have been found out, those who have many ways of killing time are always term'd ingenious, amongst the Diverse Instruments for destroying time how pretty are knitting needles, knotting shuttles, & totums & Cards & Counters, I begin to think no Woman has a chance to be Reasonable who is born with more than one hand & one Eye, for if she can be ingenious with her hands she has no chance to be so with her head … .[10]

Elizabeth Montagu's early insight into the seemingly mutually exclusive occupations of reading and female accomplishments was the product of her own education. Montagu and her sister came from a respectable Yorkshire family, the Robinsons. Matthew Robinson's direct relatives were heirs of the estates of West Layton and Kirby Hall, North Yorkshire and the mother, Elizabeth Drake, was the daughter of Councillor Robert Drake of Cambridge. Elizabeth Drake enjoyed a thorough education by the reformer and scholar Bathsua Makin (ca 1600-ca 1675). Thus, the education of her own children was paramount and included the services of her stepfather, Dr Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), the famous Cambridge scholar and clergyman, whom the family visited several times per year. In her *Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (1673), Makin wrote:

> I do not deny but Women ought to be brought up to a comely and decent carriage, to their Needle, to Neatness, to understand all those things that do particularly belong to their Sex. But when these things are competently cared for, and where there are Endowments of Nature and leasure, then higher things ought to be endeavoured after. Meerly to teach Gentlewomen to Frisk and Dance, to paint their Faces, to curl their Hair, to put on a Whisk, to wear gay Clothes, is not truly to adorn, but to adulterate their Bodies; yea, (what is worse) to defile their Souls.[11]

Whilst conservative authors of conduct books such as James Fordyce and Erasmus Darwin supported the teaching of needlework and other crafts for young girls and women during the eighteenth century, female authors such as Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft saw little value in these accomplishments.[12] They either agreed with Makin in limiting the teaching of needlework to its practical uses or wanted them discarded from any curriculum completely, like Mary Wollstonecraft: 'I have already inveighed against the custom of confining girls to their needle, and shutting them out from all political and civil employments; for by thus narrowing their minds they are rendered unfit to fulfil the peculiar duties which nature has assigned them.'[13] Hester Chapone (1727–1801), Bluestocking and conduct book writer, identifies the occupation of needlework and other crafts less as a marker of virtue and femininity than of class. In her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady,* Chapone wrote:

> Ladies, who are fond of needlework, generally choose to consider that as a principal part of good housewifery: and, though I cannot look upon it as of equal importance with the due regulation of a family, yet, in a middling rank, and with a moderate fortune, it is a necessary part of a woman's duty, and a considerable article in expence is saved by it. […] But, as I do not wish you to impose on the world by your appearance, I should be contented to see that you worse dressed, rather than see your whole time employed in preparations for it, or any of those hours given to it, which are needful to make your body strong and active by exercise, or your mind rational by reading.[14]

Even Mary Delany, who was so enthusiastic and artistic in her needlework and craft, doubted at times if her time was rightly employed. Writing to her sister, she reflected:

> Mine fits only an idle mind that wants amusement: yours serves either to supply your hospitable table or gives cordial and healing medicines to the poor and sick. Your mind is ever turned to help, relieve, and bless your neighbours and acquaintance; whilst mine I fear (however I may sometimes flatter my self that I have a contrary disposition, is *too much filled* with amusements of no real estimation; and when people commend any of my performances I feel a consciousness that my time might have been better employed.[15]

This quotation reveals the ideological quality of narratives of needlework and craft. Whilst middling classes were encouraged to (as Chapone suggested) be frugal housewives in producing and refashioning clothes and soft furnishing and needlework - a quality to be recognized by future husbands - the aristocracy was seen to produce expensive and luxurious 'fancy work' that served little or no educational or moral purpose.[16]

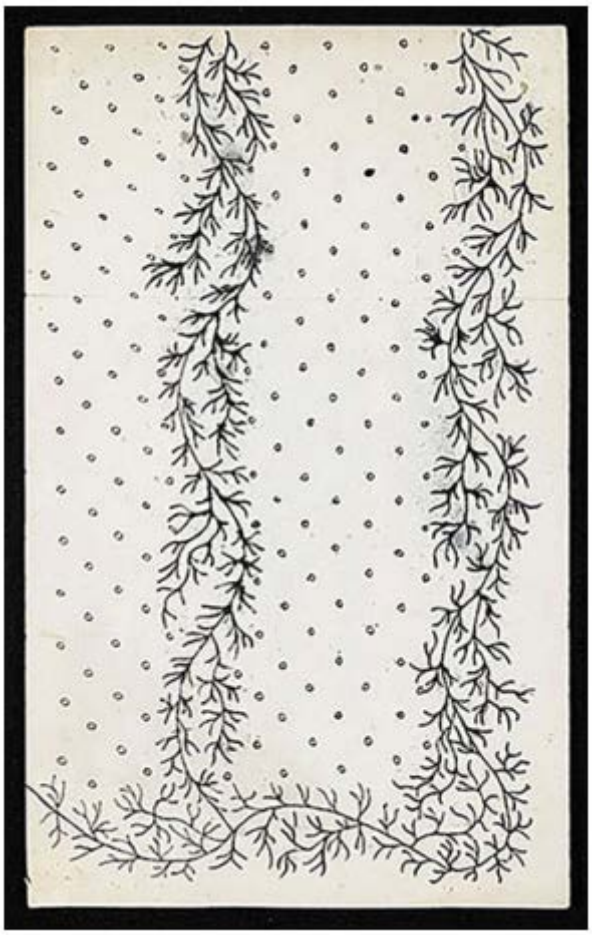
The term 'fancy work' also indicates that there was a distinction between professional and amateur workers. Amanda Vickery suggests that 'Female handicrafts were largely amateur, a

term coming into use around 1780 to mean someone who practised the arts without regard to payment, though 'amateurish' had not yet acquired the modern pejorative implication of substandard when compared with professional products.'[17] To be more precise here, the classification of needlework and the fibre arts as amateurish indicates that they were caught between specific dynamics of gender and professionalization.

Embroidery workshops had existed since the Middle Ages, mostly run by men who organised ecclesiastical and later secular embroidery executed by men and women who typically remained unnamed. Gail Marsh also identified the shift from the male professional, work-shop based industry to the eighteenth-century amateur and 'feminised' needlecraft culture. [18] Referencing Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollok, Audrey Bilger adds that

> Up to the Renaissance, most professional needleworkers were men, and there were no rigid divisions 'between art made with paint or stone and art media made with thread or fabric.' As the advent of international trade led to an increase in the demand for embroidery, however, more female amateurs found a market for their creations, and gradually men abandoned the practice as it came to be seen as women's work. [19]

Women of the period who were earning money by needlework were middling women or impoverished ladies who earned money as governesses or needle workers, like Mary Wollstonecraft herself in her early years. Patterns were used by professionals and amateurs alike, available through linen drapers and lace makers. Thrale's daughter Hester Maria Thrale, 'Queeney' thus not only crafted but also had her designs commissioned and executed by a professional, that is paid, needle worker.[20]



[Fig 1: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O97903/design-unknown/]
Design for embroidery for an apron for Miss Thrale, Anon., England. 1788,
V&A Museum No. E.227-1973.

The 'work' of needlework was thus valued as economic necessity, a profession or as part of middling class 'good housewifery' - but all as female 'work'. Any employment of these skills for personal embellishment and vanity was rejected as work and classified as 'fancy' sprung from the idleness of leisure and indicated a specific social standing.[21]

Fancy work included tatting and netting, one of the favourite pastimes of Queen Charlotte and the Duchess of Portland. In her letter Frances Hamilton of October 10, 1783, Delany described the luxurious materials and tools that Queen Charlotte used:

> The King, with his usual graciousness, came up to me, and brought me forward, and I found the Queen very busy in showing a very elegant machine to the Duchess of Portland, which was a frame for weaving of fringe, a new and most delicate structure, and would take up as much paper as has already been written upon to describe it minutely, yet it is of such simplicity as to be very useful. You will easily imagine the grateful feeling I had when the Queen presented it to me, to make up some knotted

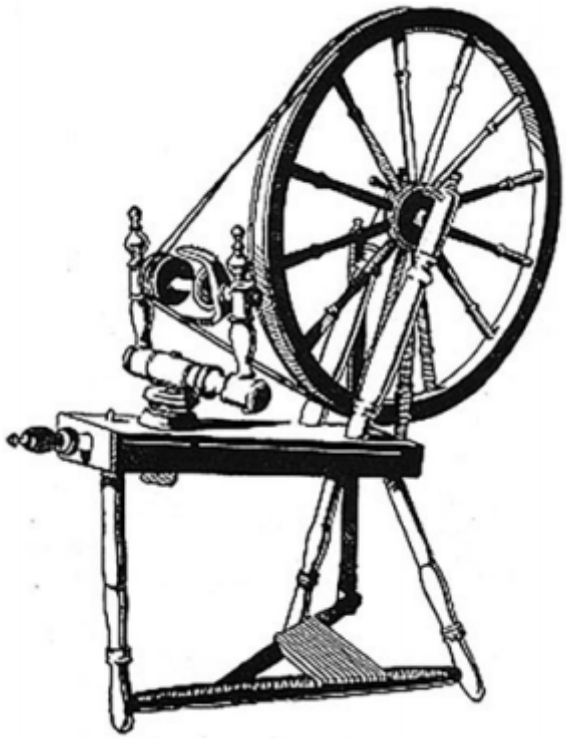
> fringe which she saw me about. The King, at the same time, said he must contribute something to my work, and presented me with a gold knotting shuttle, of most exquisite workmanship and taste; and I am at this time, while I am dictating the letter, knotting white silk, to fringe the bag which is to contain it.[22]

[Fig 2: Eighteenth-Century Tape Loom]

Tatting was fittingly called *frivolité* in French.[23] Decorative netting was another pastime and developed parallel to needle-made lacing in the early modern period. The Duchess of Portland was particularly fond of netting. In her visit to Bulstrode in 1783, Mary Delany found the Duchess of Portland occupied in making a cherry net of 100 meshes per row.[24] The opposition set up by the rhetoric of needlework (between 'fancy work' and 'plain sewing' for instance) reflects the contemporary and problematical relationship between rank and virtue, birth and worth, excess and moderation.[25] This is perhaps why the Duchess was drawn to 'amusements […] of the Rural Kind, working, Spinning, Knotting, Drawing, Reading, writing, walking & picking Herbs to put into an Herbal.'[26] In a letter to Mrs Port, Mary Delany reported:

> She [Duchess of Portland] desires her kind compliments to Mr. Granville and her spinning mistress, and bids me enclose the remains of her lock of wool, to show you how near she spins it off, and makes *no waste of ends*, all which she hopes you will approve of. In the midst of her philosophical studies she used to start up and go to her wheel for a quarter of an hour's relaxation, and intends that spinning shall be one of her employments, and chief amusements when she goes to town; her last wheel and reel stand in the anti-chamber of her great dressing room.[27]

The performance of the Duchess of Portland on the spinning wheel aided her display of her feminine accomplishments and frugal housewifery, something that Queen Charlotte also paid particular attention to.[28] In 1770, Queen Charlotte visited the Duchess of Portland at Bulstrode and was taken with a new treadle wheel, a 'little' or 'Saxony' treadle wheel that allowed the spinner to sit down. [Fig 3] In the same year, the Duchess of Northumberland marvelled at the display of spinning wheels in Paris when Lady Berkeley 'had 100 spinning Wheels brought into Coach to chuse of.'[29]



[Fig 3: Saxony spinning wheel]

The skills taught to the labouring poor or financially compromised middling classes were summarized under the umbrella term 'work': spinning, knitting, plain sewing, mending and sampler making to teach literacy, numeracy and geography. In Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Jemima regrets that 'not having been taught early, and my hands being rendered clumsy by hard work, I did not sufficiently excel to be employed in the ready-made linen shops.'[30] The Victoria and Albert Museum Textile Collection in London shows that samplers made in Quaker Schools or Charity schools used coarser materials to practice useful

stitches such as darning stitches and Hollie point which could be used in the production and refashioning of clothes.[31] Samplers exercised various alphabets in reversible stitches, pious verses or religious symbols, and taught geography in the form of embroidered maps, or mathematics in the form of cross stitch multiplication tables. However, the archives of the London Foundling Hospital qualify the idea that the labouring poor used solely coarse and cheap materials on the one hand, and on the other, that the labouring poor were all proficient in 'plain sewing.'

As John Styles has shown, the textiles used as identifying tokens by mothers who had to leave their babies in the care of the Foundling Hospital, were of different quality and provenance, ranging from cheap to mid-priced textiles, woven and printed. Styles also suggest that labouring class girls, particularly in the country side, were taught spinning and knitting rather than sewing or embroidery as the former skills guaranteed employment; thus, bought and manufactured textiles for everyday use were not uncommon for the labouring poor.[32]

Basic craft equipment such as needles, bobbins and brass thimbles were inexpensive and not reliably mentioned in inventories but more elaborate tools and equipment out of expensive materials such as horn and silver were dear.[33] The trial of Sarah English in 1744 documents that she stole aprons and handkerchiefs in order to pawn the goods for a spinning wheel which secured her future income.[34] The inventory of George Wayte, 1725, Gentleman and schoolmaster in Appleby, Leicestershire, lists 4 spinning wheels valued at £ 14, - (worth ca £1,186.50 in 2005), thus, a considerable investment. The clothing and household goods listed in Mary Stanton's inventory, also from Appleby, Leicestershire, drawn up in 1742 lists a sumptuous wardrobe of clothing - quilted petticoats, lace, velvet cloaks, a velvet hat and black silk scarves. In addition to this Mary Stanton owned a stock of Woollen Jersey, Tammy and 21 night caps. These finished goods and materials were not for her own usage but suggest that Mary Stanton participated in the cottage textile industry in the parish. Interestingly, sewing equipment was not listed in her inventory. [35]

As my brief remarks on materials and techniques of needlework in the eighteenth century suggest, the pervasive rhetoric of needlework and the material culture of textiles filtered into all women's lives and we need to take a closer look at how these discourses were negotiated and in some ways transformed in practice. They indicate issues of gender and culture, but perhaps more apparently, issues of class and social mobility, commerce and entrepreneurship.

Gentry women such as the Bluestockings were not exempt from these issues. What makes the Bluestockings interesting is that they were struggling to express their intellectual and creative desires, be it in the form of feminine accomplishments or scholarly works or both.[36] Samuel Johnson's famous praise of his 'old friend, Mrs Carter [who] could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem', encapsulates the dilemma perfectly.[37]

'Paper Mosaics' and embroidery: Mary Delany

The work of Mary Delany has recently come to the attention of scholars and art historians with prominent exhibitions at the British Museum, London, The Sir John Soane Museum, London and the Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven.[38] Whilst Delany used conventional techniques such as shell work, paper silhouettes and embroidery, her underlying interest was in skill and accomplishment and furthermore in the natural science of botany.[39] At Delville, Delany's marital home near Dublin, she designed a grotto ornamented with shells:

> My chief works have been the ceiling of the chapel which I have formerly described, done with cards and *shells* in imitation of stucco. In the chancel are four Gothic arches … made *also of shells* in imitation of stucco, the arches no deeper than the thickness of the shells, to take off the plain look the walls would have without them. The wreath round the window is composed of oak-branches and vines made of cards; the grapes, nuts, and large periwinkles, the corn, *real wheat* painted, all look like stucco.[40]

She also produced larger embroidery projects such as chair covers from worsted chenille, quilts and coverlets. Worsted chenille is part of 'fancy work', an elaborate embroidery technique with silk or in the case of Delany, flaxen threads particularly apt to create flowers and plants.[41] Delany made aprons, a fashionable and decorative piece of clothing in the eighteenth century, and designed her own court dress. [Fig 4] It was an elaborate dress made of black silk and velvet, embroidered and ornamented with silk lace. Hand-in-hand with the embroidery went sketches and drawings of the different flowers and plants, accurately depicted in their flower and structure. Delany's court dress was ornamented with over two hundred different flowers on the overskirt.[42] Delany's craft slotted into the continuing practice of using the art of drawing to prepare embroidery work but she in fact elevated the skill of embroidery to a scientific level.[43]

[Fig 4: Mary Delany, court dress, detail, silk embroidery on satin, 1740-41]

Embroidery from nature, underpinned by a scientific curiosity in botany, became indeed fashionable and by the 1740s, the terms 'to embroider' and 'to flower' were in fact exchangeable.[44] Various books on design and embroidery patterns, such as A. Heckle's *The Florist: or; An extensive and curious Collection of Flowers, for the Imitation of Young Ladies, either in Drawing or in Needle-work* (1759) were widely available. *The Lady's Magazine* and *The Fashionable Magazine* also published patterns that were copied and passed on amongst friends and family. Patterns were also available in linen draper shops where embroideries could be commissioned.

After the death of her husband Patrick Delany in 1768, Mary Delany was invited to Bulstrode by the Duchess of Portland for six months.[45] Delany enjoyed the sociability of textile work with the Duchess and records, '[a]t candlelight, cross-stich and reading gather us together'.[46] At Bulstrode Mary Delany also met Joseph Banks (1743-1820), naturalist and

botanist, George Dionysius Ehret (1708– 1770), botanist and entomologist, and Philip Miller 1691–1771), botanist and horticulturist Superintendent at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London:

> They have brought the seeds of some of them which they think will do here: several of them are blossoms of *trees* as big as the largest oak, and so covered with flowers that their beauty can hardly be imagined; ….[47]

Delany's scientific attention to detail and colour inspired her to portray the specimen and plants both in embroidery and paper. Delany's intricate and appraised workmanship was not only executed with greatest skill but with luxurious and imported materials. In a letter from Frances Boscawen to Mary Delany of 20th November, 1776:

Is this India paper good for anything to you my dear madam? It is *real Indian*, I am sure, having found it in a writing box of ebony, inlaid with ivory, w^{ch} was made at Madrass. I have half a dozen sheets more if this would be any use to you.[48]

Delany studied and used the Linnaean system of classification of the plants and produced ten volumes of botanical illustrations, which, as Horace Walpole praised, were 'executed with a precision and truth unparalleled'.[49] Joseph Banks remarked that they were the only 'representations of nature that he had ever seen from which he could venture to describe botanically any plant without the least fear of committing an error.'[50]

Delany's fashionable embroidery and public art of paper mosaics was produced within the parameters of femininity and decorum, but also within the dictum of learning and intellectual perfectibility. 'Laboured' finery and skills such as drawing and japanning that were merely entertainment were dismissed, while invaluable, botanical illustrations, botanical embroidery and shell collecting served to expand the mind and 'view with awe the great Creative Power.'[51]

Feathers and Artichokes: Elizabeth Montagu

Mary Delany would have been sceptical of Elizabeth Montagu's 'laboured' finery and display of ostentatious wealth in her residences and her personal attire. When at one of the Bluestocking assemblies at Hill Street, Delany complained, 'Was dazzled with the brilliance of her assembly. It was a moderate one, they said, but infinitely *too numerous* for *my senses*'.[52] Montagu herself strived towards the exemplary display of 'Virtue, prudence and

Temperance, [that] should sometimes keep open House, and shew there is a golden mean between churlish severity of manners and lean and sallow abstinence in diet; and indecent gayety of behaviour, and that swinish gluttony which ne'er looks to Heaven' midst its gorgeous feast but crams and blasphemes its feeder'. However, temperance in display, as we will see, was clearly not Montagu's forte.[53]

Elizabeth Montagu met Mary Delany, then still Pendarves, in 1735 through their mutual acquaintance the Duchess of Portland.[54] Their correspondence contained items such as feathers and shells, flowers and fabrics that were gathered and collected from all sources. Montagu went so far to instruct her naval brother Robert to bring back shells and feathers from his journeys, asked her sister Sarah Scott to obtain feathers and order 'people upon all our Coasts to seek for shells, but have not yet got any pretty ones.'[55] She even asked her infamous cousin Sir Thomas Robinson, Governor of Barbados, to send some shells to the Duchess:

> He shall get some shells for your Grace. He should pay you the homage of old when the conquered Nation sent some of their Earth and water to their Conquerers; he ought to do your Grace homage in every element where he has any command, and if you want either fish, beast, or bird, give him your orders, and with more than the power, take the style, of a Queen.[56]

Objects in the exhibition *Brilliant Women: Eighteenth Century Bluestockings* (National Portrait Gallery, 2008) documented these tokens of friendship and mutual intellectual interests in the shape of 'natural curiosities', friendship boxes, snuff boxes, poems and manuscripts. [57] Luxurious objects such as these commemorated the networks of Bluestocking friendship as distinct, personal and most importantly, exclusive.

When Elizabeth Montagu purchased her house in Portman square in 1775, she not only employed renowned artists and architects such as James Stuart, possibly Angelica Kauffman, Giovanni Battista Cipriani and Matthew Boulton but added her own design and ideas.[58] The refurbishment and decoration of the house took ten years and resulted in, as James Harris praised, 'an Edifice which for the time made me imagine I was at Athens in a House of Pericles, built by Phidias.'[59] The pinnacle of taste and ornament was the 'Feather Room', decorated with Montagu's original designs made of feathers, later immortalized by William Cowper in his poem, "On the beautiful Feather-Hangings, designed for Mrs Montagu.'[60] The screens were assembled and mounted on canvas in Sandleford, Berkshire, by Montagu's chief seamstress, Betty Tull and her assistants Miss Pocklington and Mrs Fry.

Montagu had some experiences with feather work with her friends the Duchess of Portland and Mary Delany. Her sister Sarah also had tried her hand at feather painting in the 1750s and Mary Anstey, Christopher Anstey's daughter and frequent visitor to Montagu's assemblies, also dabbled in the art. Anstey however deplored that her feather work was not as sophisticated : 'My feather screen makes but a poor figure yet. Could I carry it with me into company, as one does a piece of knotting it would be soon finished. But as I can only imploy that time upon it wch I have to myself it goes on but slowly. For when one can retire onto ones chamber & be still the houres may be better spent in the sorting of feathers.'[61]

Montagu was blessed that Sarah Scott supported her by collecting feathers and co-ordinating some of the work. Elizabeth Montagu wrote to her enthusiastically:

> I have orderd some whole feathers to be sent out of my stock for present use. I will get some fine goose feathers for them as soon as Gees are slain. In the mean time I am collecting some white feathers which I will send by some opportunity from hence. Betty Tull served me a sad trick in leaving y^{e} feathers, to be moth eaten. I have a great proposal in my head in y^{e} feather way.[62]

In a later letter of Oct 14, Montagu wrote to her sister: 'I have sent Miss Pocklington some Goose feathers, let me know if they want more. I have done or rather they have done for me, part of a feather trimming for a Sack. Betty & M^{rs} Fry soon dispatch a trimming in y^{e} mosaick way.'[63] A letter to Elizabeth Carter of 1786 gives us some indication of who the seamstresses were:

> My Feather work, tho of a tedious nature, had made a great progress since I left it; the ingenious Betty Tull, y^{e} clever little girl her elève, an elderly Virgin, & two old Widows having been constantly employ'd at it, besides casual assistance. Betty & y^{e} little Girl are y^{e} only Persons who can do ye fine parts but ye inferior artists do ye ground, & y^{e} mosaic, one Widow Gentlewoman has been employd for above 4 months in stripping y^{e} feathers of ye downy part, & preparing them for use, and, an expence I did not regret, as I had y^{e} pleasure of observing that in the time she moulted her own threadbare garments, & acquired new & warm ones. She is y^{e} Widow of a Farmer reduced to parish Allowance, not by his or her late Husbands fault, but various misfortunes.[64]

Montagu was conscious of the responsibilities and duties her immense wealth brought. She exercised paternalistic charity and benevolence to her colliery workers in Northumberland and the chimney sweeps in London, all displays of charity that, as Eger has rightly argued, were very public.[65] The employment of impoverished gentlewomen, the financial support of Sarah Scott and fellow writers such as Sarah Fielding was less ostentatious and was

mentioned in private letters between Montagu and her close friends or her sister Sarah. Montagu's letter to Carter also indicates the scale of the project and the mixed abilities that the seamstresses and impoverished gentlewomen had. Elizabeth Montagu certainly was a hard taskmaster and Betty Tull's health suffered greatly during the project. When she was ill in 1788, Montagu eulogized:

> Poor Betty Tull is I fear going to take her flight to another World. As a virgin she might claim y^{e} white plumes of the Ostrich for her Hearse, but her triumphs over the whole feather'd Race may give her pretensions to evry feather, of every bird, from the Eagle to y^{e} Wren; from the Croaking Raven to the chattering Parrot.[66]

The room however was a legendary success. The *St James Chronicle* praised the room:

> Wholly covered with feathers, artfully sewed together, and forming beautiful festoons of flowers and other fanciful decoration. The most brilliant colours, the produce of all climates, have wonderful effects on a feather ground of dazzling whiteness.[67]

Elizabeth Montagu marked her social advancement from a modest companion and friend to the Duchess of Portland to the 'Queen of the Blues' and a wealthy coal magnate by producing and commissioning decorative work that moved from the category of 'fancy work' to public art.[68] This was expressed also in the scale of the work that moved away from smaller decorative items crafted by women to the installation of a whole 'objectscape'. [69] The material and social properties of this 'objectscape', particularly in her mansion at Portman square, not only helped to emphasise Montagu's social rise in the polite world, but also underpinned the idea of 'cultured feminine community' which the Bluestockings represented. In this vein, it was not, according to the *St James Chroni*cle, classified as art – it remained 'fanciful' and thus amateurish.[70]

'to embroider what is wanting': Sarah Scott[71]

Sarah Scott did not rise in the world in an equal fashion to her sister. Scott married, against the will of her family, the sub-preceptor to the Prince of Wales and mathematician George Lewis Scott on 15 June 1751. Her father, Matthew Robinson, reluctantly provided Sarah Scott with a dowry. There are still speculations about the hastened separation that was clearly manoeuvred by Scott's family. In April 1752 Matthew Robinson and his sons removed Sarah Scott from her marital home in London. George Lewis Scott refunded half of Sarah Scott's

dowry to her father but continued to support her with £150 per annum.[72] In the ensuing years, the correspondence frequently refers to Scott's general financial worries. George Lewis Scott was not always diligent in his payments and thus compromised his wife's financial security. Thus, Sarah Scott returned to Bath as a neither single nor married woman to set up a household with her life companion Lady Barbara Montagu.

Sarah Scott belonged to a different social network than her sister.[73] This is marked by the nature of the objects exchanged between the two women. Montagu supported Scott with food, materials and money during her financially lean years. She advised Scott on the latest fashion trends, so that Scott could refashion her clothing into a respectable and current state. At times, Scott employed specialists such as hoop makers to alter her clothes :

> I shou'd be obliged to you if you wou'd in your next letter send me word what sized hoops moderate people; who are neither over lavish or covetous of whalebone, wear; because I intend to write to my hoopmaker to have one ready for me against I come to Town, …

Different to her sister, Scott remains sceptical about the waves of ostentatious fashion:

> I hope our hoops will not increase much, for we are already almost as unreasonable as Queen Dido, & don't encircle much less with our whalebones, than she did with her bulls hide, & I am afraid we are not so excuseable for her ground was to build a Town, whereas what we gain is only for a sort of wall, which in some measure hinders the trade & use of the Citty.[74]

In addition to updating clothes, appearances required also that clothes would be clean which was neither straightforward nor cheap. When Scott wrote to her sister about the state of her clothes, she expressed embarrassment and shame:

> My flower'd gown & petticoat is very dirty I shou'd be oblig'd to you if you wou'd tell me whether you think it will be necessary for me to buy a lutestring gown & petticoat as the flower'd is so dirty & my night gowns are shabby enough; but answer this in private.[75]

In the early years of the correspondence between the sisters, Montagu and Scott also exchanged embroidery and appliqué patterns for the fashionable aprons and shared in detail the progress of their fancy work:

> I return you my thanks for the leaves, & desire you will not abuse them. they are as distinct as need be, & if I can but make them big enough will be of great service to me;

> I am afraid the drawing them may have hurt your eyes, & if I had not been just then a little forgetfull of their weakness I wou'd not have set them so hard a task.[76]

Scott acted as quasi-agent and producer for her sister's decorative projects in Hill Street and Portland Square in London. In 1766, Montagu had her Hill Street Dressing room redecorated in Chinoiseries. Sarah Scott was conferring at length her sister about the design and colour of the chairs:

> I have yet heard nothing of M[r] Adams, but when he sends his design will give the best directions I can, but am somewhat in the dark having only heard you cursorily mention it the night before you left London. I presume the Chairs are for the dressing room. am I to buy silk for any more than the tops of the Cushions, & the back of the two Chairs that have stuffed backs. Is it to be workd with silk or worsted, & am I to buy either to suit the colours of the pattern? when you fixed on blue did you recollect that the frames of your Chairs are light green. I will speak about the airing of the feathers, & the rest of your Commands.[77]

Whilst Montagu was able to furbish her homes with silk, feathers, rare shells and lacquer work, Scott decorated her homes with found and natural materials,

> we gilded cones corn acorns poppy heads & various evergreens with flowers & leaves in lead & some fruit in pipe makers clay, with these she [Mrs Isted] made a frame to the glass, & continued the work in a light pattern with small bracketts for eleven pieces of small china, from the top of the room to the chimney spreading over the whole pannel; it is really the lightest & prettiest thing I ever saw, & suits the rest of the room ….[78]

Aware of the greater plight of impoverished gentlewomen and the labouring poor, Lady Barbara Montagu and Sarah Scott took impoverished servant girls into their houses in Bath and Batheaston, employing them to produce silk flowers and other crafts to teach them skills and economic independence. Scott and her helpers supplied her sister with silk flowers which served as ornaments to Montagu's wardrobe:

> You have not answered me about your Tissue silk, if it is for a Gown I woud advise all the Roses shoud be red, which will be excessively pretty mixed with the green leaves, & I know you have no dislike to Rosecolour. Till I know its destination, I make them do only such a number as at all Events will be red, & the remainder will be done according to your order. If You determine to have this all red Roses, those in that I sent You that are not so, I think we can so far take the colour out of & have them done over with red that it will not be perceived when put least in sight that they have ever been otherwise.[79]

Scott's charitable enterprise echoed the principles of charity and empowerment in her successful reformist novel, *Millenium Hall* (1762). *Millenium Hall* is based on the principles of vertical friendship and self-help that unite the household, tenants, the wider family and

villages in the manner of a country estate. The charity work described in the novel does not only keep every member of the estate in their place but more importantly, helps the poor and disadvantaged to provide for themselves. The women in the alms-houses sew, spin and cook for the benefit of the whole community with the understanding that everyone contributes as best as they can. The community's carpet and rug manufactory functions as a social enterprise, where the profits are invested in a 'fund for the sick and disabled.'[80]

Scott was also very aware of the economic and political changes that affected local and national craftspeople and traders: a 'true Englishman [would] have preferred the Woollen Manufacture to anything flax can produce.' [81]Underlying this seemingly throw-away remark is a comment on the decline of the English woollen industry. Since the late seventeenth century, the English woollen industry had been under threat from cotton and flax (linen) imports from India, Russia, Egypt and the Levant. To support the national wool industry thus became a nationalistic concern. When Scott resided in Norfolk, a county that prospered in the wool trade, she commented on The Wool Bill of 1788. The Bill allowed Irish yarn to be freely imported into the country for the first time and consequently wool prices in Norfolk plummeted.[82] In 1794, she remarked:

> The Manufactory at Norwich has just received [a] terrible blow. The Russians have dealt greatly with them for some time, for what they call striped goods & very great quantities have been lately made for transportation thither, & now the Empress has just prohibited their importation, which portends ruin to large numbers, & they have appointed a meeting to petition the Parliament or his Majesty to endeavour to prevail on the Empress to revoke her prohibition.[83]

Scott was a social reformer, her political convictions and charity projects were informed and by principles of Practical Christianity and self-help. Her own charity projects and the fictional *Millenium Hall* community slot into contemporary practices of needlework as basic economic work for the labouring poor or impoverished gentlewomen. The work promoted in *Millenium Hall* was thus plain sewing, embroidery and rug making - crucial to the flourishing mercantile economy.

Femininity and female sociability were associated with handicraft. Whilst Mary Delany was eager to frame her decorative textiles and scientific paper appliqués within the framework of her Anglican devotion underplaying the aspects of natural science and public art, Elizabeth Montagu had no qualms in displaying luxury and wealth. Nevertheless, Montagu claimed unimpeachable credentials in the pursuit of 'a golden mean between

churlish severity of manners and lean and sallow abstinence in diet'. Her social ascent to the 'Queen of the Blues', wealthy coal magnate and business woman was counterbalanced by Montagu's self-fashioning of herself and her salon as a civilizing force. Her display of quasi-public art in her house at Portland Square marked the boundary between polite and enlightened society and the vulgar.[84] Sarah Scott was in many ways Elizabeth Montagu's moral monitor. Her implementation of principles of Practical Christianity in her local community countered Montagu's ostentatious wealth. However, her charitable projects were dependant on and underpinned Montagu's patronage and social exclusivity. Ellen Kennedy Johnson has shown that '[t]he type of needlework a woman performed was often determined by her social standing or class position. Notions of propriety that were linked to needlework were also affected by class or social rank.'[85] Needlework and textile arts were not only markers of gender and class ideologies (particularly when it came to the classification of professional vs. amateur/art vs.craft) but recorded very sensitively how women within the Bluestocking circle negotiated ideologies of femininity and domesticity and how social aspirations or circumstances were mirrored in the materiality and scale of textiles and fibre arts. In order to bring such patterns to light, the cultural narratives of needlework need to be read alongside the material history of needlecraft.

Illustrations

[Fig 1]: Design for embroidery for an apron for Miss Thrale, Anonymous, England 1788, V&A Museum No. E.227-1973

[Fig 2]: Eighteenth-Century Tape Loom

[Fig 3]: Saxony Spinning wheel

[Fig 4]: Mary Delany, court dress, detail, silk embroidery on satin, 1740-41

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1 Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Grace Robinson Freind, May 18, 1742. Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 965. I thank Elizabeth Eger, Betty Schellenberg, Moira Thunder, Ellen Kennedy Johnson and the generous peer reviewers for their advice and help.
2 Amanda Vickery, 'A stitch in time', *The Guardian*, 17.10.09, *Review*: 18.
3 Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984, London: Tauris, 2010); Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes, eds., *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Mary C. Beaudry, *Findings: The Material Culture of Needlework and Sewing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006; John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); *Jo Dahn,* 'Mrs.

Delany and Ceramics in the Objectscape,' *Interpreting Ceramics* 1 (2000) (http://www.interpretingceramics.com/issue001/delany/delany.htm).

4 Ellen Kennedy Johnson*, Alterations: Gender and Needlework in the Late Georgian Arts and Letters* (PhD Dissertation, Arizona State University, 2009), 64. On the juxtaposition between fine art and craft, specifically needlework, see Rosemary O'Day, 'Family Galleries: Women and Art in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, *'Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (June 2008): 323-349. On the aspect of consumption and luxury, see Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: British Women and Consumer Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988, 1996).

5 For a similar comparison, see Amanda Vickery, 'The Theory and Practice of Female Accomplishments', *Mrs Delany and her Circle*, ed. by Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg Roberts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 94-109.

6 John Styles has documented that the techniques learnt are very much dependent on class and economic necessity. See John Styles, *Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital's Textile Tokens, 1740-1770* (London: The Foundling Museum, 2010), 58-61.

7 Styles, 60.

8 I support Emma Major's argument that the term 'Bluestocking' is useful up to a point to describe the sociable gatherings hosted by Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Vesey. Indeed, the three case studies I have chosen here played very different roles within the Bluestocking circle. Mary Delany was part of the social gatherings and fitted the intellectual pursuits of the circle but was more prominently embedded within the court circles of the time. Elizabeth Montagu, the 'Queen of the Blues' started the prominent gatherings in Hill Street and continued them later in the luxurious Portland Square in London. Sarah Scott was not part of the Bluestocking circle, was however acquainted with most of the figures and represented, what Gary Kelly called, 'Bluestocking feminism'. See Emma Major, *Madame Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 79-83; Gary Kelly, ed. *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, 6 vols. (London: Pickering Chatto, 1999).

9 My underlying framework is a 'theory of culture with women as subjects – not commodities but social beings producing and reproducing cultural products, transmitting and transforming cultural values.' Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 93.

10 Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Grace Robinson Freind, May 18, 1742. Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 965.

11 Bathsua Makin, *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (1673), quoted in Frances N. Teague, *Bathsua Makin, Woman of Learning* (London: AUP, 1998), 109-150 (128).

12 James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (1766); Erasmus Darwin, *A plan for the conduct of female education in boarding schools* (1797); Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799).

[13] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication for the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792; London: J. Johnson, 1796), 391. See also Johnson, Chapter 2.
[14] Hester Chapone*, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*. *In two volumes.* (1773, London: H.Hughs, 1774), II, 62-64.
[15] Quoted in Ruth Hayden, *Mrs Delany: Her life and her flowers* (London: The British Museum Press, 1980), 95.
[16] Fancy work included knotting, tambour work and appliqué. See Thérèse de Dillmont, The Encyclopedia of Needlework (1884): http://encyclopediaofneedlework.com.
[17] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 251. See also her whole chapter, 'What Women Made', 231-256.
[18] Gail Marsh *18th-Century Embroidery Techniques* (Lewis: Guild of Master Craftsman Publications, 2006). See also Clare Hunter, *Threads of Life: A History of the World through the Eye of a Needle* (London: Sceptre, 2019).
[19] Audrey Bilger, ''A History Reduc'd into Patches': Patchwork and the Woman Novelist', *Quilt Culture: Tracing the Pattern*, ed. by Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 18-32 (19). Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
[20] The Victoria and Albert Museum has designs of 'Queeney's' aprons bought also by 'Hon. Miss Holroyd', 'Miss Emily Pelham' and used by a professional embroiderer. See Museum number E.227-1973. I thank Moira Thunder for sharing this information with me. See also Moira Thunder, 'Object Lesson: Designs and Clients for Embroidered Dress, 1782-94, *Textile History*, 37.1 (2013): 82-9.
[21] On women's work in the eighteenth century, see Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 1993); Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender and Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester: MUP, 2010); Christine Hivet, 'Needlework and the Rights of Women in England at the end of the Eighteenth Century,' Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré, Cécile Révauger, eds., *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 37-46; Daryl Hafter, ed., *European Women and Preindustrial Craft* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995); Pamela Sharpe, ed., *Women's Work: The English Experience 1600–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion: The Transformation of Women's Work in England 1500–1660* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
[22]Mary Delany, *Letters from Mrs. Delany* (*widow of Doctor Patrick Delany) to Mrs. Frances Hamilton, from the year 1779, to the year 1788: comprising many unpublished and interesting anecdotes of their late majesties and the royal family: now first printed from the original manuscripts* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821), 33.
[23] The earliest true tatting, as we know it today, was found on two chair covers made by Mary Granville Delany in 1750. A portrait of Madame Adelaide, the daughter of Louis XV, painted by Jean-Marc Nattier in 1756 shows her holding a large tatting shuttle and Benjamin West's 1776 portrait of Queen Charlotte with Charlotte, Princess Royal, is also depicting them tatting a piece of material together.
[24] Sylvia Groves, *The History of Needlework Tools and Accessories* (Newton Abbot: David &Charles, 1973), 81.

[25] In French literature of the time, the opposition is set up between 'tisser' and 'broder' and is on the same ideological continuum as the binary juxtaposition of 'text' and 'textile'. See 'Ouvrages de dame? Ouvrages d'une dame? Présentation du thème', *Cahiers Isabelle de Charriere/Belle de Zuylen Papers: 'Women's work: pens and needles of Belle de Zuylen'*, 1 (2006): 9-17. On the opposition between needle and pen, see Carol Shiner Wilson, 'Lost Needles, Tangled Threads: Stitchery, Domesticity, and the Artistic Enterprise in Barbauld, Edgeworth, Taylor, and Lamb', Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner, eds., *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 167-190; Kathryn R. King, 'Of Needles and Pens and Women's Work', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 14.1 (Spring 1995): 77-93.
[26] Letter of Margaret Cavendish Harley, Duchess of Portland, to Elizabeth Montagu, June 30, 1738. Elizabeth Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 176.
[27] Letter of Mary Delany to Mrs Port, 19th November 1771, Mary (Granville) Delany & Lady Llanover, *The autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany : with interesting reminiscences of King George the third and Queen Charlotte*, 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1861), II, 370.
[28] On the significance of spinning in the creation of the discourse of feminine domesticity, see Mary L. Bellhouse, 'Visual Myths of Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century France', *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, 12. 2. (Apr., 1991), 117-135.
[29] Groves, 30.
[30] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman*, ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 113.
[31] Clare Browne and Jennifer Wearden, *Samplers* (1999, London: V&A Publishing, 2010).
[32] Styles, Threads of Feeling, 58-61.
[33] Vickery, 'The Theory and Practice', 95.
[34] *Old Bailey Proceedings* Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 25 October 2012), April 1744, trial of Sarah English (t17440404-4).
[35] See Inventories of Appleby, Leicestershire at http://www.applebymagna.org.uk/appleby_history/ar14_inventories_18th_c.html
[36] Anne Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Eger, 'Things: Material Cultures of the Long Eighteenth Century', paper given at the *Elizabeth Montagu Letters Project* Workshop, Huntington Library, April 2012. A French/Dutch case study, Isabelle de Charriere, is presented in Suzan van Dijk's ''N'ayant jamais pu souffrir aucun ouvrage': Belle de Zuylen et son '*reprisoir*' (1758),' *Cahiers Isabelle de Charriere/Belle de Zuylen Papers: 'Women's work: pens and needles of Belle de Zuylen'*, 1 (2006): 18-33.
[37] Quoted in Claudia Thomas, 'Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Carter: Pudding, Epictetus, and the Accomplished Woman', *South Central Review*, 9.4. (Winter, 1992), 18-30 (20).
[38] Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, eds., *Mrs Delany and Her Circle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[39] See Maria Zytaruk, 'Mary Delany: Epistolary Utterances, Cabinet Spaces, & Natural History', 130-149; Janice Neri, 'Mrs Delany's Natural History & Zoological Activities: 'A Beautiful Mixture of Pretty Objects', *Mrs Delany and her Circle*, 172-187.
[40] Quoted in Hayden, 101.
[41] *The young lady's book: a manual of elegant recreations, exercises, and pursuits By Young Lady* (London: Vizetelly, Branston and Co, 1839), 299; Margaret Jourdain, *The History of English Secular Embroidery* (London: Dutton and Co., 1912), 120.

[42] Hayden, 90; Clare Browne, ‘, Mary Delany’s Embroidered Court Dress’*, Mary Delany and her Circle*, 66-79.
[43] O’Day, 327-328; Parker, 119-123.
[44] Parker, 119; See Florence M. Montgomery, ‘English Textile Swatches of the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 102, No. 687 (Jun. 1960), pp. 240-243, on the relationship between watercolours and textile prints.
[45] See Madeleine Pelling, “Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41.1 (2018): 101–120.
[46] Delany, *Autobiography*, I, 3: 473. The artist Jane Wildgoose created an installation in 2009/10 reflecting on the relationship between the Duchess and Delany; “Promiscuous Assemblage, Friendship & The Order of Things”. *Promiscuous Assemblage, Friendship, & the Order of Things: An Installation by Jane Wildgoose in Celebration of the Friendship Between Mrs. Mary Delany & the Dutchess Dowager of Portland; on View from September 24th, 2009 to January 3rd, 2010 at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, and from February 18th to May 1st, 2010 at Sir John Soane's Museum, London* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2009).
[47] Quoted in Hayden, 115.
[48] Delany, *Autobiography,* II, 279.
[49] Quoted in Hayden, 158; John Edmondson, ‘Novelty in Nomenclature: the Botanical Horizons of Mary Delany’, *Mary Delany and her Circle*, 188-203; Lisa Ford, ‘A progress in Plants: Mrs Delany’s Botanical Sources’, *Mrs Delany and her Circle*, 204-223.
[50] Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: President of the Royal Society* (1911, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); See also Samantha George, *Botany, Sexuality and Women's Writing 1760-1830: From Modest Shoot to Forward Plant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).
[51] Delany, *Autobiography,* I, 484-486; Preface to *Plants Copied after Nature in Paper Mosaic*, quoted in Parker, 123.
[52] Delany, Autobiography, II, 97.
[53] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to William Pepys, 14 August 1781, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 4069.
[54] E.J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings*, 2 vols. (London: 1906), I, 18.
[55] Climenson, I, 18; Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Margaret Harley Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland, 5th May, 1741, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 297.
[56] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Margaret Harley Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland, January 1741/42, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 317. On the exotic materials for the feather screen, see Ruth Scobie, “To dress a room for Montagu”: Pacific Cosmopolitanism and Elizabeth Montagu’s Feather Hangings, *Lumen*, 33 (2014): 123–137. doi:10.7202/1026568ar.
[57] Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: Eighteenth-Century Bluestockings* (London: NPG, 2008), 37-39. See also Pelling on the global aspects of these material objects and friendship tokens.
[58] See Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses 1670-1830* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003), 284 (note 129), on Kauffman’s involvement.
[59] Letter of James Harris to Elizabeth Montagu, 4 November 1780, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 1133
[60] *Gentleman's Magazine* 58 (June 1788), 542.

[61] Letter of Mary Anstey to Elizabeth Montagu, 1752, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 108.
[62] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, August 28 [1774], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5959.
[63] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 1774, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5964.
[64] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, 25 September 1781, Montagu Collection Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 3517.
[65] Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: 'Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 78.
[66] Letter of Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Charlton Montagu, December 17, 1788, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 2975.
[67] *St. James Chronicle*, 11-14 June 1791, quoted in Beard, 189.
[68] See Elizabeth Eger, 'Things: Material Cultures of the Long Eighteenth Century.
[69] Dahn, n.p.
[70] On the separation of art from craft, see particularly Joshua Reynold's 'First Discourse', delivered at the opening of the Royal Academy on 2 January 1769. J. Reynolds, Discourses on art, ed. P. Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000). Mary Linwood's fate is indicative of this distinction. A prominent 'needlepainter', she turned oil paintings into embroidery. Though highly successful, her art was deemed inferior to painting. See Parker and Pollock, 67.
[71] On mending and alteration of clothes in the Bluestocking Circle, see Nicole Pohl, 'To Embroider what is Wanting': Making, Consuming and Mending Textiles in the Lives of the Bluestockings', *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Chloe Wigston Smith and Serena Dyer (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).
[72] Climenson, II, 7.
[73] On the different social networks that Elizabeth Montagu belonged to, see Anni Sairio, *Language and Letters of the Bluestocking Network: Sociolinguistic Issues in Eighteenth-Century Epistolary English* (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2009).
[74] Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, Feb 25 [1740/41], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5167. Contemporary satire came to target fashion in the second half of the century quite vigorously. See Diana Donald, *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satires from the Georgian Period* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2002).
[75] Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, [June 29, 1744], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5189.
[76] Leaves: used for embroidery work. Whilst embroidered aprons were fashionable, they were not always acceptable. The Duchess of Queensbury was publicly criticized by Richard Nash, then Master of Ceremonies at Bath, for wearing an apron to the Assembly Rooms. Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, 11 [? November 1741], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5170.
[77] Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, [May 31, 1766], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5329.
[78] Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, [1752], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5223.
[79] Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, [1763], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5308.
[80] Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent Together with the Characters of the Inhabitants and such Historical Anecdotes and Reflections as May excite in the Reader proper Sentiments of Humanity, and lead the Mind to the Love of Virtue by 'A*

Gentleman on his Travels'. In the following, citations are from the edition Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall, e*d. by Gary Kelly (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995), 247.

81 Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, [6 November 1755], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5251

82 Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, June 23 [1788], Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5445.

83 Letter of Sarah Scott to Elizabeth Montagu, Jan 1794, Montagu Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, MO 5500.

84 See Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995), see also: Emma Major, 'The Politics of Sociability: Public Dimensions of the Bluestocking Millennium', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65(1–2) (2002), 175–92.

85 Johnson, 5.